The World

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THE GREATER PERILS OF THE RAIL.

With the newspapers commenting on the details of five tragedies of the rail occurring in two days, it is interesting to turn to the record of the first bad train wreck in America, which took place on the Erie Railway July 24, 1846, near Monroe, Pa. The railroad was then five years old. Car wheels with spokes were in use, and the breaking of one of these cast-iron rollers caused the accident.

Six persons lost their lives through this wreck. The country was horror-stricken. The whole world discussed the catastrophe. From this accident came the first damage suits ever brought by injured train passengers. Also, the substitution of solid wheels for wheels with spokes.

From 1846 to 1903 were fifty-seven years of tremendous railway development. But the expansion in mileage did not eclipse that in slaughter on the rail.

During 1903, according to the figures of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the number of persons killed on American railroads was 11,006; injured, 89,872. Two years earlier—for the year ending June 30, 1901—there had been a record of 8,455 killed and 53,339 injured. So disaster swells its lists. The current year has been already fruitful of wrecks of the pro portions now required to create a sensation.

We no longer shiver when the affair on the rails is of one, two or even six killed. But last Saturday there were sixty-two dead on the Southern Railway; in August sixty were killed on a Seaboard Air Line wreck and twenty-two in a Denver and Rio Grande crash; July had the Erie wreck at Midvale, with sixteen dead, and a Chicago and St. Louis smash with nineteen victims; January saw seventeen killed in a Rock Island collision. And these are not all the horrors of the past nine months.

Every little while there comes up, as it has come up now, the question of a remedy for the intensified perils of the rail. It is no longer, as in 1846, a matter of putting solid wheels in place of spoked ones. Invention has done its present utmost for safety, apparently, with block signals, air brakes, patent couplings and automatic apparatus of various kinds. But even to a road like the Southern, equipped to an approximation of perfection, there comes the accident which an officer of the company is forced to say "no foresight could prevent."

On such an occasion it is the human element that fails.

At Midvale, in July, somebody did not see that a defective block signal was promptly repaired.

On the Southern Railway, last Saturday, somebody disobeyed the train despatcher's plain orders.

Of the thirty-one chief casualties on American railroads in 1903 twenty-one were in the form of collisions, and properly classable in this stage of railroading as preventable.

What are we going to do to stop the piling up of such records of deadly fault?

Catastrophes have been attributed to the overworking and overfatigue of men, to illness, to carelessness, to bad memory, and even to disqualification by age. Time after time a great disaster has been traced to the fact that upon a single mind has been laid a complex burden of seeing, remembering and acting.

There is abundant argument in the records of railway wrecks for The Evening World's proposition that there shall be two engineers in the "Mogul" cab and two train despatchers where vital issues centre. The law which, in the interests of employees, can force the use of automatic couplers should exert its powers in a plain case for the saving of passengers.

But law cannot cover the whole task of making the railroads as safe, absolutely, as they may be. The time is fully ripe for the managers of the country's passenger traffic to get together and plan for the safety of their human cargoes as earnestly, at least, as now, in occasional meetings, they discuss standard rates, rebates and the war on "scalpers."

FIRE-ALARMS AND POLICE.

Facts and figures there sometimes are too eloquent to require comment. For instance, there are these statements about the police and the fire-alarms, repeated here from yesterday's Evening World, where they were given on the authority of Fire Chief Croker.

Out of 5,129 fires in 1897 the police turned in 1,051 alarms.

Out of 6,556 fires in 1899 the police turned in 1,263 alarms.

Out of 2,355 fires in January, February and March of this year, fourteen alarms were turned in by the police.

Out of 1,362 fires in April, May and June of this year, twenty-nine alarms are credited to the police.

Almost as plainly as The Evening World's reporter-roundsmen in automobiles were able to do it, these figures show where the man on post failed to be the man "on the spot."

Even the firebugs can afford a lack of respect for patrolmen who do not patrol.

MARY JANE and Kickums Show Their Dads How to Play Football.

Old Wives and Young Husbands.

By Nixola Greeley-Smith.

Nixola Greeley-Smith.

"I KNOW men must have money to spend, but I don't think it's right for a man to take the savings of a lifetime from his wife and go away and never return."

So, muttered in mild expostulation to a newspaper reporter, Mrs. Koogan, aged seventy-eight, whose husband of thirty-two had gone away with her bank-book, apparently never to return.

Every one will agree with Mrs. Koogan that it is not right, but they will be pretty certain, nevertheless, that it is bound to happen whenever a doting old octogenarian marries a man less than half her age.

There is nothing at once more pitiful and more ridiculous than the love of an old woman for a young man, indeed, than the sentimental love of an old woman under any circumstances.

Love, at least so far as women are concerned, is distinctly a youthful emotion, and should end when youth ends. Of course, we know it doesn't; that old women are, indeed, far more prone to foolish sentiment than young ones. But the fact remains that no woman over forty with any self-respect ought to permit herself to fall in love.

It is very unbecoming, in the first place—unbecoming is used not as applying to her conduct, but to her appearance. Probably no one except the man she loves ever fully realizes how wonderfully beautiful the face of a young woman in love can be. But the very emotions which may beautify at twenty-five may distort and caricature at forty-five. Love flames and sparkles in the eyes of a young woman, but when those eyes have looked upon nearly half a century of life it is more apt to make them water than to flame. It curls the lips of the young woman into a new, smiling mobility, but in the old woman it accetuates the mouth's drooping lines and the flabby heaviness of the falling jaw.

To be sure, men have loved old women—the shade of Ninon de l'Enclos, said to have been loved at ninety, rises to back the assertion every time it is made—and the Bible injunction not to marry one's grandmother shows that she was not regarded as altogether on the shelf.

In the old days, before printing was invented, when literature was laboriously handwrought on scrolls, and parchment and vellum were scarce and expensive, it was often the custom of the monks to erase the early records and use the blank spaces thus obtained for newer MSS. And often this was done three or four times, and the parchments so treated were called palimpsests. It has always seemed to me that the memories of sentimental old women must be like these palimpsests—and, indeed, their faces are not unlike them, either.

There is nothing more charming than an old lady content to be old, nor more ridiculous than an old lady trying to be young.

I once knew an old lady of seventy who was very rich and very much in love with a man about half her age. As I knew the man very well, she selected me for the confidante of her sentiments. One day she would tell me that she had just made her will in his favor, leaving him her entire fortune without conditions. The next she would storm up and down the room proclaiming that "she was the equal of any man without her means" and that "she would be loved for herself alone or not at all."

She didn't get that man because he wouldn't have married her on any terms, but later she became the bride of a young adventurer who spent all the money she would give him and then left her.

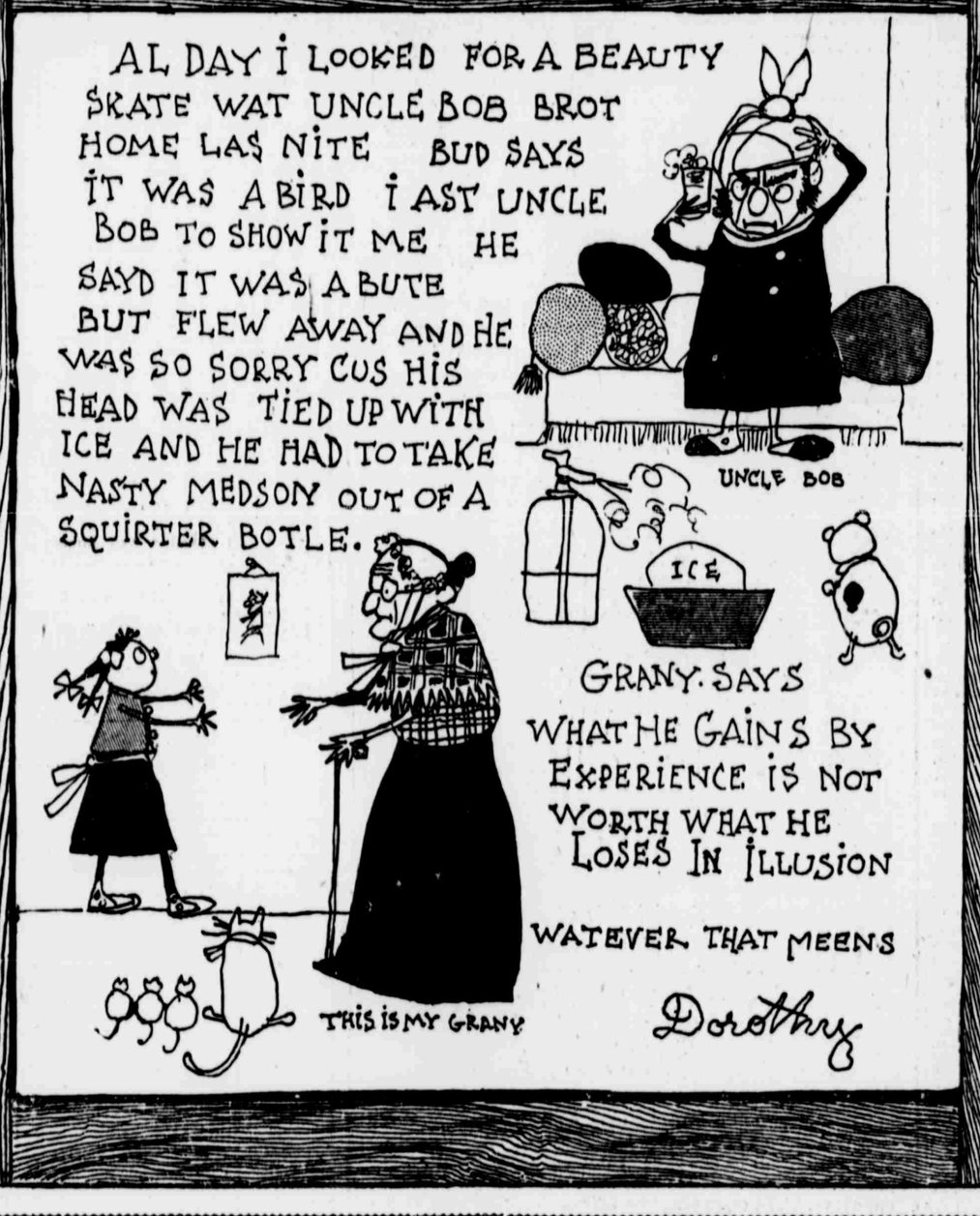
Her account of the desertion was pathetic. She was a very avaricious old lady and notwithstanding her wealth would not keep a servant.

"He went away about 5 o'clock. He was going out to play pool, as he always did in the evening. I was all alone in the apartment and helpless with rheumatism. I said to him before he went out: 'I wish, darlink, you would rub my arms with liniment before you go.' But he said: 'Never mind, Julie, dear. I'll be back by 9 o'clock, and that'll be time enough.' He didn't come back at all and all that night and the next day I was alone and so helpless I couldn't reach out my hand for a drink of water. Then my brother-in-law came in, or I might have starved to death."

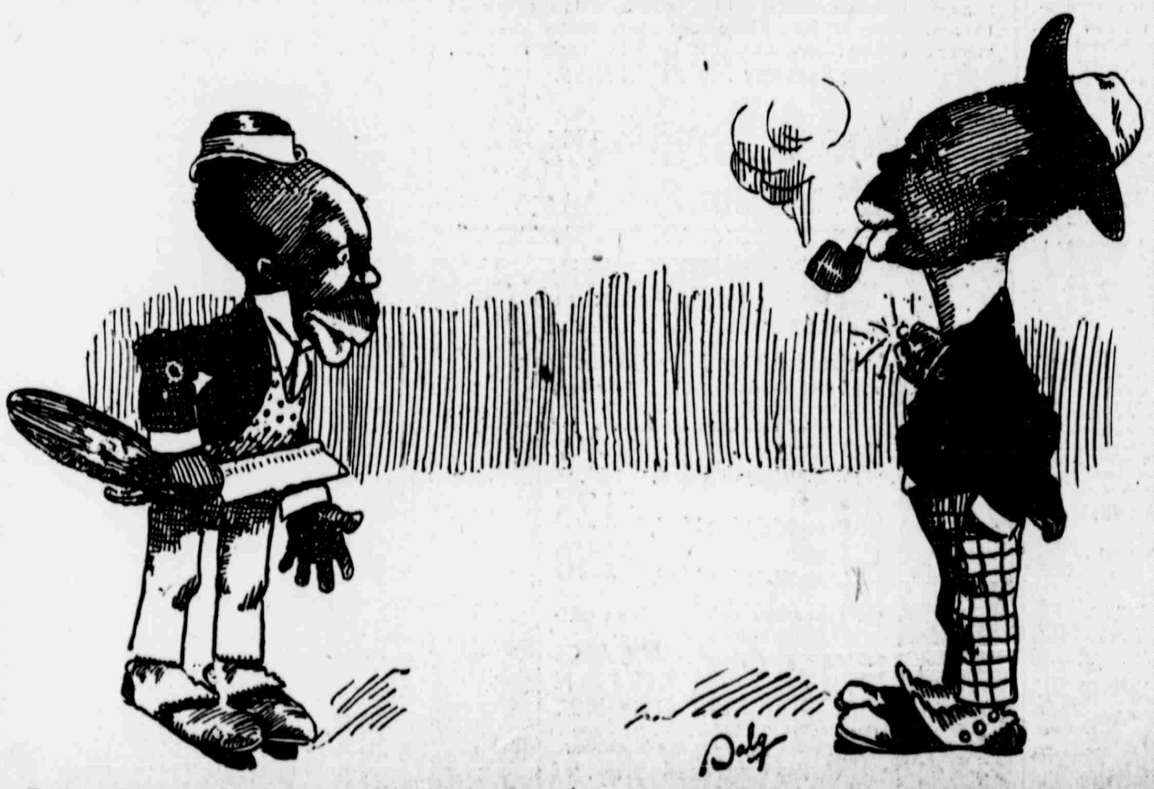
Of course, all old wives are not treated with such shocking brutality by the young husbands they take in their dotage. But they never fail to have occasion to regret their unutterable folly.

Dorothy's Diary.—No. 3.

She Seeks in Vain for a Beautiful Skate Uncle Bob Brought Home the Night Before.



Keen Repartee in Darktown's Smart Set.



Reggie Corntassel—I s'pose, mah friend, yo' use yore razzah to bettah yore appeah'nces.

Zip Johnson—Yas, an' sometimes w'en I use it I has to bettah mah disappeah'nces.

By Martin Green.

The Spiritualist Habit Is One That Can't Be Fractured with a Crowbar.

"I SEE," said the Cigar Store Man, "that Dr. Funk, the Sherlock Holmes of Spookdom, has unearthed a factory out in Chicago where they manufacture phony props for spiritualistic seances."

"The discovery," remarked the Man Higher Up, "won't shrink the crop of soft marks who seek speech with the spirits of departed friends or relatives. When a man or a woman gets the spirit bug it becomes cemented. The appetite for the society of spirits reminds me of the appetite for the assimilation of spirits that come in bottles and are pushed over bars.

"The booze fiend is confronted by object-lessons every time he turns his head, but he keeps on hitting the booze. If he takes an hour to himself he can recall hundreds of soaks who have hit a hard finish, but he never lets up. His common sense tells him that every souse he puts aboard piles up a line of discounts, but he puts his common sense in cold storage and keeps to his course of lapping up the distillery output.

"Once upon a time I kindly volunteered to help break a man of the habit of frequenting seances and regulating his actions by the advice of a frog-eyed female medium who claimed ability to materialize anything from the ghost of a little child to the soul of a good Indian. She held her seances in his house and charged 50 cents a throw for the privilege of seeing the performance.

"There was the usual setting of a dark room, a melodeon (negotiated by the medium's son), and a cabinet. Clammy hands rubbed across our faces as we sat in a circle with hands joined and sang to drown the noise she made as she shifted the props. Finally a white figure floated around the circle. The signal was given and those in the conspiracy leaped upon the white figure. The lights were turned up, and there was the medium attired in a sheet. In the cabinet we found a long megaphone, about two hundred yards of white cheese cloth, a glove full of wet sawdust and other appropriate stage settings. The medium's son materialized a gun from his hip trousers pocket, and we had to slap him quite severely before we could get him subdued."

"I suppose it broke the guy of failing to fake spirits?" suggested the Cigar Store Man.

"Yes, it did," replied the Man Higher Up, "for about fifteen minutes. He admitted that the medium was a fake, but said that her exposure only made him stronger in the belief that there were honest mediums who could materialize; and the last I heard of his family his wife was taking in plain and fancy sewing and he was playing the medium circuit three shows a day."

How Ants Sleep.

During sleep the ant's body is quite still. Occasionally may be noted a regular lifting up and setting down of the fore feet, writes H. C. McCook in Harper's Magazine, one leg after another, with almost rhythmic motion. The antennae also have a gentle, quivering, apparently involuntary movement, almost like breathing. The soundness of slumber was frequently proved by applying the feather end of a quill. The feather tip is lightly drawn along the back, stroking "with the fur." There is no motion. Again and again this action is repeated, the stroke being made gradually heavier. Still there is no change. The strokes are directed upon the head, with the same result. Then the feather is applied to the neck with a waving motion, intended to tickle it. The ant remains motionless. Finally the sleeper is aroused by a sharp touch of the quill. She stretches out her head; then her legs, which she shakes also; steps near to the light, yawns, and begins to comb her antennae and brush her head and mouth. Then she clambers over her sleeping comrades, dives into an open gangway, and soon has said "good morning" to another tour of duty. Be it well noted, however, that she has gone to work, as she and her fellows always do, not only rested, but with her person perfectly clean!

Albino Fish.

C. R. Pettis, of the New York State Forest, Fish and Game Commission, describes for Science some peculiar fish that were hatched artificially at Saranac Lake in March, 1902. Among the fry obtained from 800,000 eggs a very small number—perhaps fifty—were practically colorless. Only four lived to maturity. Two of them are typical albinos.

Safe Third-Rail Scheme.

An electric third-rail train system that is claimed to be safe and trustworthy has been invented by a Chicago man. By means of his device, in which the third rail is inverted, and practically hidden from view, the inventor declares it impossible for persons or animals to come in contact with the charged rail.

Last of Mormon Jail.

The building at Liberty, Mo., familiarly known as "the old Mormon jail," has just been torn down. The structure was Liberty's jail during the Mormon war in Missouri many years ago, and a lot of Mormon prisoners were confined in it at that time. Many members of the Mormon sect have visited Liberty within recent years to see the prison in which their brethren languished during the "persecution."